



Governor's Committee on  
Employment and Rehabilitation  
of People with Disabilities



# *Annual Report 2007*

  
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
*Jobs are Alaska's Future*

## HISTORY

The Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities was among the first Governor's advisory committees established following statehood in 1961. It was established and codified by then Governor Egan to promote the employment of people with disabilities under AS 23.15.270.

In response to the 1992 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council was appointed in June 1993. On April 11, 1997, the Governor of Alaska, by Administrative Order 171, combined the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council, the Assistive Technologies Advisory Council, and the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. The Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities (Committee), developed new bylaws and reassigned standing and subcommittee members.

The Committee focuses on rehabilitation, assistive technologies, public awareness and the employment of people with disabilities. It recognizes that these are all integral aspects to the successful education, training and employment of people with disabilities.



## RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide consumer input and advice designed to “influence system policy change.”
- Review, analyze and advise the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) on the performance of its responsibilities.
- Review, analyze and advise DVR on the preparation of its state plan, applications, reports, policies and procedures, needs assessments and evaluations.
- In partnership with DVR, develop and review DVR's goals and priorities.
- Jointly conduct a comprehensive, statewide assessment describing the rehabilitation needs of individuals in the state.
- To the extent possible, conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with, DVR services and employment outcomes.
- Coordinate and consult with other councils in the state, including the Alaska Workforce Investment Board and the State Independent Living Council.
- Prepare an annual report on the Committee's activities.
- Jointly with DVR identify a pool of qualified, impartial hearing officers.

# COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

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# PROGRESS ON 2007 GOALS

## Employment and Legislative Goals

Goal 1: Encourage employers to hire individuals with disabilities: **Completed.**

Several presentations were made to employers and employer groups such as Chambers of Commerce and Rotary Clubs.

Goal 2: Host an annual awards ceremony to recognize and honor employers and others who have promoted accessibility, employment and rehabilitation of people with disabilities: **Completed.**

The annual awards ceremony was held in Anchorage and was very well attended by employers, community rehabilitation programs, staff and consumers.

Goal 3: Continue collaboration with the Governor's Council on Disability and Special Education to address employment priorities identified through the Aging and Disability Policy Summit: **Goal completed and on-going.**

The Committee collaborated with the Governor's Council and together they supported mutual bills and educated legislators about employment and disability issues.



Goal 4: Actively work to change state statute that limits the number of seats (12) on the Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities, (Committee), to be consistent with the federal regulations: **Goal completed and on-going.**

HB 178 was created which, once passed, updates the current statute making it in compliance with the federal regulations.

Goal 5: Identify the Committee's priorities as bills are introduced through working and collaborating with Legislative Information Offices, the Governor's Council on Disability and Special Education and the State Independent Living Council: **Goal completed.**

The Committee collaborated with the State Independent Living Council and the Governor's Council on Disability and Special Education. Mutual bills were supported and

legislators were educated about employment and disability issues.

Goal 6: Visit and educate new and veteran legislators about the Committee: Who we are, what we do, the legislative priorities we support and the purpose of the DVR: **Goal completed.**

The Committee met with legislators in their home communities and also at the capital. 2006 was an election year with a change in the administration. As a result many of the legislators and the governor were new and unfamiliar with the Committee and the Division.

## Resource, Evaluation and Planning Goals

Goal 1: Develop a process to ensure client satisfaction is assessed: **Goal completed.**

A written satisfaction survey was developed and mailed throughout the state.

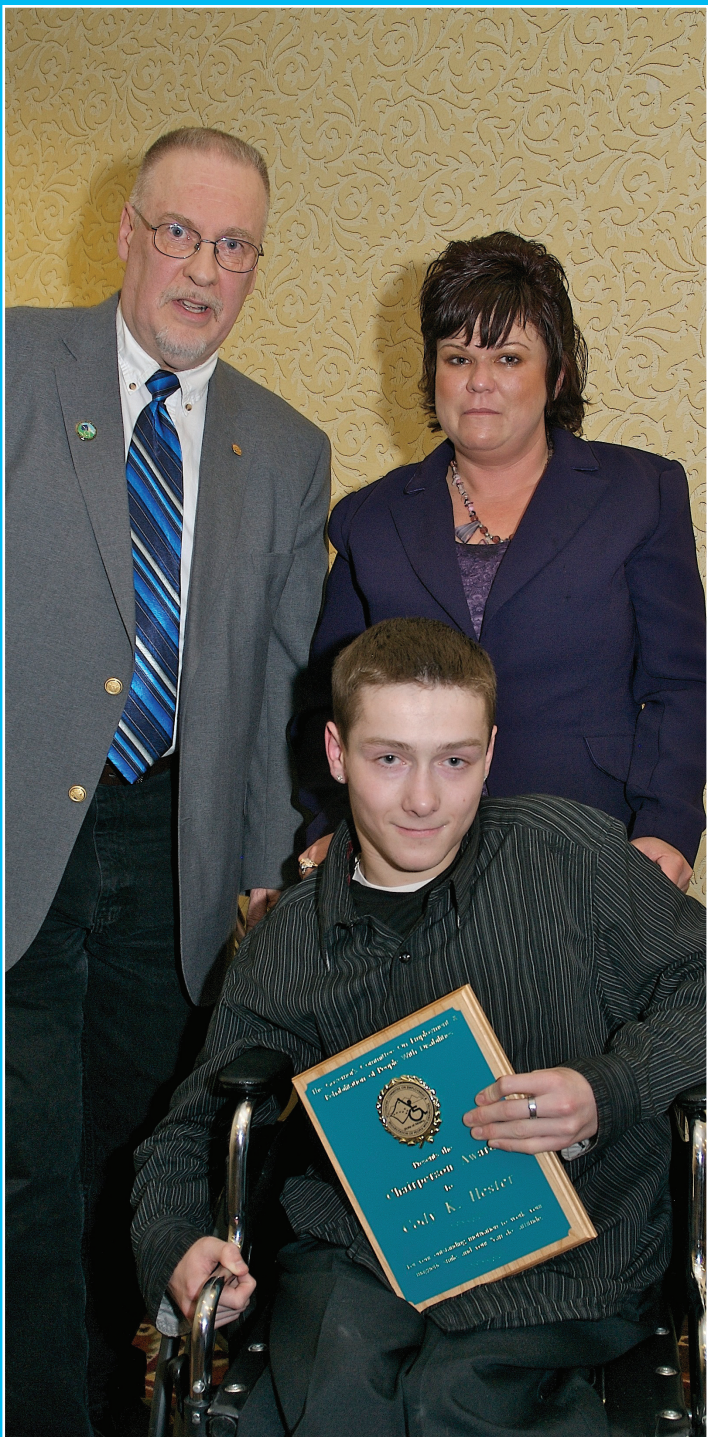
Goal 2: Implement a pilot satisfaction survey: **Goal completed.**

A pilot of the survey was mailed and returned.

Goal 3: Recruit new members with a priority on recruiting a youth member: **Goal completed and on-going.**

Members and staff met often with the Division of Boards and Commissions to discuss appointment of new members and the federal requirements regarding the Committee's composition requirements.

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## PROGRESS ON 2007 GOALS *continued*

“Because of a degenerative condition I can no longer work in the construction and welding field which I did for over 30 years. I am enrolled with Alaska Technology Learning Center and when I complete my course of study I will be certified as an IT computer technician. If it wasn’t for DVR this opportunity would not have been available.”

*- Public testimony*

### Assistive Technology Goals

**Goal 1: Promote early assessment, evaluation, identification and use of Assistive technology (AT) for youth: Goal Completed and on-going.**

AT members met with staff of the Special Education Service Agency to discuss AT assessment and use by students with disabilities.

**Goal 2: Develop youth involvement with assistive technology, leadership and community involvement: Goal completed and on-going.**

The Committee sponsored and assisted Assistive Technology of Alaska in hosting the first national AT conference in Alaska. The conference focused on education, leadership and community involvement. There were over 60 speakers and 110 breakout sessions.

**Goal 3: Host one Committee meeting per year which focuses on AT issues and developments: Goal completed and on-going.**

The AT Subcommittee met with the full Committee face-to-face in Anchorage. Various AT presentations and demonstrations were made throughout the three day meeting.

**Goal 4: Develop strategies to increase resources to enable consumers to access and acquire appropriate AT: Goal completed and on-going.**

AT members worked closely with the Division in writing policies and procedures for individuals applying for AT loans.

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# 2008 GOALS

## Assistive Technology

### **1. Promote early assessment, evaluation, identification and use of AT.**

*Objective: Disseminate AT information statewide.*

Action Items:

- Recommend to full Governor's Committee to include AT information on their website.
- Explore possibility of adding a direct link to State of Alaska's website on AT information.
- Ensure AT information is included on the new "Network for Care" (IL) statewide website.
- Ensure new AT national brochures that will be coming soon are modified for Alaskan use and disseminated.

### **2. Develop strategies to increase resources to enable consumers to access and acquire appropriate AT.**

*Objective A: Develop additional AT funding resources.*

- Work with Governor's Committee's Legislative Subcommittee to lobby for additional AT funding.

*Objective B: Develop a statewide AT coalition.*

- Identify key partners for this coalition.
- Facilitate meeting to develop this statewide coalition to explore implementing best practices.

### **3. Ensure one Governor's Committee meeting per year focuses on AT issues and development.**

*Objective: Demonstrate the new "Network for Care" statewide website.*

## Resource, Evaluation and Planning

### **1. Governor's Committee member recruitment and training.**

- Develop strategy to identify potential members.
- Department of Labor (Legislative liaison special asst.)
- Past award recipients.
- DVR recommendations.
- Monitor receipt of potential member applications.
- Establish working relationship with the Division of Boards and Commissions (Dan Sadler).
- Orient new members.
- Identify mentors from current Committee to pair with new members.

### **2. Work with DVR to develop a comprehensive resource plan which both meets the needs of the Committee and reflects the related cost of DVR staff support time.**

### **3. Review Bylaws and recommend amendments as needed.**

### **4. Provide recommendations to DVR in regards to new or proposed policies, procedures and/or the state plan.**

### **5. Identify method(s) of delivery for consumer satisfaction survey between the division's administrative and field offices.**

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*Principle: Individuals with disabilities and DVR counselors will work as partners applying the principles of informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process.*

08  
APRIL



“I have a career with health insurance today as a result of the assistance I received from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation...”



## Employment and Legislative 2008 Goals

Encourage employers to hire individuals with disabilities.

Make presentations to employer groups and provide information about the DVR and Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs and the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

Work with DVR and develop an improved website link.

Actively promote employer partnerships.

Host the annual awards ceremony.

Collaborate with the Governor’s Council on Disability and Special Education to address employment priorities.

Actively work to update the statute that limits the number of seats on the Governor’s Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities.

Obtain language for the legislation and identify a legislator to support and introduce the legislation.

Identify the Committee’s priorities as bills are introduced through working and collaboration with legislative information offices, the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education and the State Independent Living Council.

Visit and educate new and veteran legislators about the Committee, what we do, who we are, the legislative priorities we support and the purpose of DVR.



...I am now helping others and myself.”

-Public testimony



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# TRAINING AND RESOURCES



## Summary of 2007 Training

- Three members participated in the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation biannual conferences.
- Members attended and participated at Alaska's first Assistive Technology Conference.
- Members hosted a table at the Alaska Special Education Director's Conference.

## Resource 2007 Expenditures

For FY 2007, in addition to the usual meeting expenses, the Committee spent funds on the following:

- Promoted and hosted a disability award ceremony in Anchorage.
- Provided lodging and travel expenses for award recipients to attend the award ceremony.
- Provided real-time captioning at all quarterly meetings.
- Provided sign-language interpreters for public input at all committee meetings.

## 2008 Resource Plan

- Promote and host the annual disability award ceremony in Fairbanks.
- Have Division staff available to provide professional and administrative support to the Committee.
- Host one national teleconference for State Rehabilitation Councils.
- Attend and participate at biannual meetings of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- Have Division staff available for assistance and support. Professional staff support at 50 percent (\$51,900), and administrative staff support at 25 percent, (16,200). These totals include annual salary, leave accrual, health insurance and retirement.
- Provide real-time captioning and sign language interpreters at all committee meetings.
- Hold four face-to-face meetings at different locations throughout the state.

“Because DVR was there when I needed them, now I can be there for Alaskan children as a teacher.”

- Public testimony

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*Principle: DVR values collaborative relationships that foster integrated services with youth transition, one-stop job centers and other community resources.*

JUNE08

“We all grow as a people when our citizens are educated and working together.”

## Mission

**To work with Alaskans  
who experience disabilities  
to enter career paths  
and maintain employment.**

“If it had not been for DVR I would not be a teacher today.”

“If it weren’t for DVR I don’t know what I’d be doing. I really don’t believe that I would be here.”

“I live in Atkasuk, the next village to Barrow. The DVR has done an excellent job on my behalf.”

“I’m a disabled Vietnam veteran. I’ve been a client of DVR for three years now... They have treated me with more respect and dignity than I’ve received at any VA place.”



“I’m a retired veteran. I stumbled upon DVR. They listen to you, try to find out what you need, try to create programs within their guidelines to help you be a better citizen in this state.”

“Because of the services and support I’ve received through DVR, I’m a certified optician through the American Board of Opticianry.”

“Because DVR  
was there when I  
needed them, I can  
now be there for  
Alaskan children as  
a teacher. ”



\* All quotes throughout  
this report are taken from  
the public testimony given  
at each of the Committee's  
quarterly meetings held  
throughout the state.

## ***2007 Committee Members***

Jackie Bisbee  
North Pole - Section 121 Representative

Ron Boynton  
Fairbanks - Employer

James Burton  
Fairbanks - DVR Service Recipient

Teri Buckmeier  
Anchorage - Employer

Liza Diebels-Paramore  
Juneau - Employer

Mayfield Evans  
Anchorage - Employer / WIB

SueEllen O'Connor  
Wasilla - VR Counselor

Rebecca Simpson  
Anchorage - CRP Representative

Pam Stratton  
Anchorage - Client Assistance  
Program

Racheluz (Pinky) Tooyak  
Point Hope - Advocacy / CRP Representative

Cheryl Walsh  
Juneau - DVR Director

Velja Elstad  
Staff

Carol Stephens  
Staff

# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

## Accomplishments for State Fiscal Year 2007

“Today I am working for a wonderful organization as a professional doing the work I was trained to do...”



...The DVR program is absolutely essential to people with disabilities who desire meaningful work...”

- Public testimony

- 485 different Alaska employers hired DVR clients
- 526 individuals exited the program successfully employed for 90 days or more
- 37 individuals exited as self-employed
- 3,897 individuals participated in the VR program
- 2,688 individuals received information and referral services through orientation
- 2,319 Individualized Plans for Employment were implemented
- 20 percent of the applicants were youth (age 23 and under)
- 79 percent of the individuals were significantly disabled with multiple barriers to employment
- Average yearly wages increased from \$5,200 at application to \$27,000 for those completing VR employed. The average hourly wage increased from \$2.52 to \$12.98
- For every dollar spent, \$8.28 will be returned as client income
- \$1,600,000 was spent on training 682 individuals
- A total of \$4,800,000 was spent on direct services to clients

### DVR clients by primary disability type:

|                               |            |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| - Physical and orthopedic     | 41 percent |
| - Psychiatric                 | 32 percent |
| - Cognitive                   | 19 percent |
| - Deafness/Hearing Loss       | 6 percent  |
| - Blindness/Visual Impairment | 3 percent  |

### DVR clients went to work in these jobs:

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| - Service occupations                          | 26 percent |
| - Professional, paraprofessional, or technical | 20 percent |
| - Clerical                                     | 19 percent |
| - Construction                                 | 18 percent |
| - Sales  | 13 percent |

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# Award Winners

The Governor's Committee's annual awards ceremony recognizes the individuals, employers and organizations that have made a significant contribution to the employment of people with disabilities.

## Alaskan of the Year

Ruth L'Hommedieu



L'Hommedieu has volunteered more than 25 years in the disability field to better the lives of people with disabilities. She is an inspiration to many.

## Governor's Award

Darcy Logan  
*of Palmer*



Throughout the more than 20 years that Logan has owned and operated Alaska Vocational & Counseling Services, she has touched the lives of literally thousands of people.

## Large Employer of the Year

Carrs/Safeway  
*in Wasilla*



The store's staff, especially Barrie Brant, go the extra mile to employ people with disabilities. They've also made their store available for training, job search and evaluation services.

## Small Employer of the Year

Pike's Waterfront Lodge  
*in Fairbanks*



Pike's owner, Representative Jay Ramras, the lodge's staff and the management are commended for taking the time to carve out positions for people with disabilities to work.

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*Principle: Individuals with disabilities are a valued influence in determining the direction and offering guidance to DVR to best meet the needs of Alaskans with disabilities.*

AUGUST08

# Award Winners

The Governor's Committee's annual awards ceremony recognizes the individuals, employers and organizations that have made a significant contribution to the employment of people with disabilities.

## Youth Award

Jessica Chapman  
*of Ketchikan*



A car accident during her high school senior year left Jessica unable to walk or talk and with limited use of one hand. Still she graduated and now attends the University of Alaska as well as tackles accessibility issues as an advocate.

## Carolyn Peter Volunteerism Award

Accepted by Rick Pillans for  
Matt Jamin  
*of Kodiak*



In 1975 Matt helped start the tribal vocational rehabilitation program, Threshold Services. Volunteering endless hours and his expert legal advice, he's truly the glue that has kept the organization together.

## Chairperson Award

Cody K. Hester  
*of Wasilla*



Cody is a role model who has increased the awareness of employing people with disabilities. He got a job in the graphic arts design section of UPS and then completed a college level graphic arts design course.

## Hewitt Memorial Award

Karen Coady  
*of Anchorage*



As program manager for the Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Karen's most important role is to help the hurt and injured move from anger, grief and hopelessness to self-confidence and belief in a successful future.

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Principle: DVR believes in and promotes the principles of stewardship in the use of public resources.

# SEPTEMBER 08

# Award Winners

The Governor's Committee's annual awards ceremony recognizes the individuals, employers and organizations that have made a significant contribution to the employment of people with disabilities.

## Barrier-Free Design Award

John Bachner

**Bachner  
Companies**

Bachner Companies designed an accessible and affordable facility space which goes beyond ADA compliance and meets Access Alaska's specific independent living program needs. It serves as a model of accessibility for the entire state of Alaska.

## Removal of Attitudinal Barriers Award

Dave Poulin  
*of Anchorage*



Dave is recognized for volunteering hundreds of hours to develop the first Alaska paralympic sports program for children and adults with physical disabilities. He was also instrumental in starting the Blaze Sports Alaska Program.

"Part of the problem is that we always shipped everybody out of town.

**I grew up here and there wasn't anyone who was disabled kept here.**

If you were born with a disability you were put away. And if you were kept it was an act of God that your family kept you."

- From public testimony

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*Principle: DVR values employing and developing the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff.*

08  
**NOVEMBER**



Principle

DVR presumes that the majority of people with disabilities can be competitively employed.



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Principle: DVR staff will be trained to deliver services in a culturally sensitive manner.

08

DECEMBER

**The Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities**

801 West 10th Street, Suite A

Juneau, Alaska 99801

V/TDD: (907) 465-2814 or (800) 478-2815

[www.labor.state.ak.us/govscomm/home.htm](http://www.labor.state.ak.us/govscomm/home.htm)



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